

CONFESSIONS OF A WIFE

WHERE TWO OR THREE ARE GATHERED TOGETHER

"What's all this, Miss Margaret, that I am reading so much about lately?" asked Annie this morning. "This feminist question? I went to a lecture last night and a little mouse-colored woman of about 45 declared vehemently that 'Every woman should have the privilege of choosing the father of her children.'"

Mollie, who sitting beside my bed helping Annie with her baby clothes began to laugh.

"It made me laugh, too, Mollie, darlin'," continued Annie with that Irish twinkle in her eyes that I love so well, "for I said to myself, 'Sure, we can't be doin' much else than choosin' the father of our children when we marry them.'"

"What she might have meant, Annie," said Mollie, "is that if a woman wanted children and no husband she should be allowed to have them."

"Now, Mollie, you are making fun of me!" exclaimed Annie, while her face expressed both a desire to laugh and a horror of the idea.

"No, Annie, I am not; a good many women are advocating these theories now. I'll wager if you had made inquiries that you would have found the woman who made the statement was an unmarried woman."

"Of course she was, for I asked," said Annie.

"Well, perhaps that poor woman's arms ache to clasp a baby," suggested Mollie.

"Well, there are plenty running around loose that would be glad to let her clasp them," was Annie's observation. "What would be the objection of her choosing a baby instead of a father to one?"

I laughed aloud. There was the quick mind of the Irish woman and the courage to prick any bubble—no matter how large and iridescent—that was palming itself off as something stable.

"I have been thinking and talking

a lot about this marriage question since I married," said Mollie, "and I have come to the conclusion that marriage as we now know it is far from being a perfect institution."

Annie looked up in horror.

"Whatever do you mean by that?" she asked. "Do you mean you don't believe in marriage?"

"Certainly, Annie, I believe in it as the best thing we have, to date, for the propagation of the race and the sanctification of the home, without which no country can live. But I do not think it is a perfect arrangement by any means. If it were perfect there would be no divorces, you know. I believe a marriage ceremonial should be a civil service only. I really don't think marriage has anything to do with one's religion, except in the moral sense in which every act that a person does affects religious faith more or less."

"Look here, Mollie," I interrupted, "this is not you talking, but Chad."

"Perhaps," she acquiesced, "and yet Chad is quite as conventional and loath to disturb things as is the average man."

"Yes," said Annie, with a laugh, "I have noticed that whether it was Mr. Symone with all his money and education, or my Terry with only his native wit and good nature, each is quite willing that his wife should guard the morals and religion of the family."

"Which is as it should be, Annie. A woman should be more moral than a man," said I.

"Why?" said Mollie, quickly. "Is she not just as human? Does she not have the same temptations and the same incentives?"

"Yes, but to her is intrusted the greatest of all work of civilization."

"Go into the conservation business very extensively is what most men believe," interrupted Annie, "which brings us back to the first question,